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Creating a health care law to be proud of

Why the House plan to make health care work again must pass

By Dan Weber - - Thursday, March 9, 2017

ANALYSIS/OPINION:

Some call it by its official name, the “American Health Care Act.” Others have already taken to calling it “Trumpcare” or “Ryancare.” But by any name, the promise of the House Republican plan to repeal Obamacare and replace it with a better, market-based system is abundantly clear. This bill is the first phase of an effort to fulfill years of promises by Republican legislators ever since the bitter medicine of Obamacare was first rammed down Americans’ throats on a party-line vote in 2009.

President Trump echoed those promises on the campaign trail in 2016. The White House and Congress now have a critical opportunity to fulfill the promises they have made to the American people over and over again. To miss that opportunity because of partisan squabbling would be a betrayal of the voters’ trust.

The American Association of Mature Citizens (AMAC) represents 1.3 million American seniors, and we have a vested interest in the state of health care in this country. Yet this is not merely an issue for senior citizens. Our members recognize the importance of leaving a strong American legacy to the next generation. We want high quality affordable care for Americans of all ages and from all walks of life. That’s why we’ve been involved with the repeal effort from the very beginning, meeting with key members of Congress and with HHS Secretary Dr. Tom Price.

This legislation represents a crucial first step toward crafting a health care system that respects a robust marketplace while still looking after our most vulnerable citizens. Its key provisions will modernize a dilapidated health care system that has only been made worse by years of chaos under Obamacare. By expanding the use of Health Savings Accounts (HSAs), it gives individuals and families greater freedom to meet their health care needs. Rolling back the individual and employer mandates imposed by Obamacare will save millions of dollars and further help the economy by keeping small businesses afloat, free of burdensome regulatory costs. Finally, the bill contains built-in protections for current beneficiaries of the Obamacare exchanges so they don't feel the rug has been pulled from under them — a feeling familiar to many who lost their plans or doctors under Obamacare in the first place.

This is hardly a perfect bill, and there will no doubt be changes and adjustments made as it moves through the Reconciliation process. We should welcome those changes, and make sure to hold our representatives and senators accountable. But the congressional leadership under Speaker Paul Ryan, Chairman Greg Walden of the Energy and Commerce Committee, and Chairman Kevin Brady of the Ways and Means Committee have cobbled together a valiant effort in spite of opposition not just from Democrats but from some in their own party. And the new, dynamic administration is on their side — Mr. Trump is “proud” of the House bill and Secretary Price, for many years the main architect of Republican healthcare reform efforts in Congress, is at the helm of the department that will implement it.

The time for action is now. We may not have the luxury of such a golden opportunity as this. If Obamacare is repealed now, its damage to the American economy and health care system can be mitigated before it threatens the next generation. With midterm elections coming in 2018, Republicans must act now, while they enjoy a unified government, to keep the promise they have been making repeatedly for so many years. Let's not lose sight of the forest for the trees. Americans voted for “repeal and replace” — let's give them what they want.